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By Rev J. P. Lane
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HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF

BEECHWOOD CHURCH

TOGETHER WITH THE

EXERCISES OF DEDICATION,

JANUARY 15, 1867.

BOSTON:
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Aug. 16, 1876

Rev. J. P. Lane

NOTE.

The facts embodied in the history of Beechwood enterprise, and the suggestions of the dedicatory discourse, were regarded by the friends who listened to them as being of such value as warranted their wider circulation. A committee of publication was appointed, and the discourse, with other material, was kindly placed at their disposal. Owing to the sickness of the pastor, a list of donors and other facts of interest could not readily be obtained.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.

Three miles from the southerly terminus of the South Shore Railroad, at Cohasset, Mass., is the Village of Beechwood. It lies on the boundary of Scituate, and properly includes residences in both Cohasset and Scituate.

There being no place of worship within several miles, the want of a church edifice was early felt by the people. The circumstances which led to the establishment of religious ordinances, in 1862, at Pratt's Corner, and the subsequent efforts for the building of a Meeting-house, are narrated in the address of the Pastor, which follows. The simple recital embodies facts of deep and tender interest, illustrative of the power of a living faith united with the spirit of true self-denial. It also adds a new chapter to the ever-lengthening record of the achievements of female labor and prayerfulness. Looking at the comely sanctuary which crowns the pleasant heights of Beechwood one may truly exclaim, Behold the fruit of that leaven which a *woman* took and hid!

The corner-stone of the new house was laid on Tuesday, October 18, 1866. Lowery skies and a chilling east wind did not prevent the assembling of an out-door audience of several hundred. Rev. E. P. Thwing presided; Rev. J. P. Terry offered prayer; the Pastor made a statement of the progress of the enterprise; and Rev. S. H. Hayes delivered an appropriate address:

"It is an important epoch in the history of any people, when the corner-stone is laid of their first place of worship. The solemnities of this day therefore have a depth of meaning, a historic import, and a relation to the future, which it is not possible for us duly to estimate. It is an event that rises above all the common enterprises of this world.

"The breaking of this ground; these enduring foundations; this corner-stone, with the sacred memorials beneath it, that shall tell the tale to other generations, — all speak to us with a force and eloquence, compared with which words are feeble.

"The sanctuary of God has not sole reference to the future world and its awards. Look upon the beautiful towns of this Commonwealth, teeming with industry, smiling with plenty, and alive with an intelligent and happy people. It is mainly because the gospel has been preached. God has been worshipped; the people have had religious instruction; temple spires point to Heaven; church bells call the people to prayer, the children are

taught their duty to God and man, virtue is honored, vice is rebuked, order secured; love to God, and good will to man, are inculcated.

"In the sanctuary great truths are taught to men. They stir the human faculties as no other themes can; they teach us the mind of God; they reveal right and wrong; they proclaim eternal law and penalty; they point to the way of pardon; they elevate, ennoble and purify the soul, and fill it with the grandest hopes of life and immortality.

"These ceremonies to-day indicate, that there are those here who are hungering for these blessings."

At the close of the address, an abundant collation was served in the unfinished vestry below. The occasion was one of great interest.

On Tuesday, January 15, 1867, the welcome sound of the church-going bell was heard for the first time at Beechwood. At its call, large numbers came and filled the house before the hour appointed, crowding also the aisles and vestibule. After a voluntary on the organ, one of Smith's sweetest and most powerful instruments, the gift mainly of a neighboring pastor, the choir sung the anthem entitled "Lord of Hosts." Rev. Cyrus Stone then spoke as follows:

"In dedicating this church edifice to God, it may be interesting to state certain facts in which his guiding hand has been specially manifest. The inception of this mission enterprise was marked by the observance of forty days of fasting and prayer. The providence of God had brought a Christian mother to sojourn in Beechwood. On her arrival, she saw its destitution, as regards religious privileges, there being at that time no stated preaching of the gospel on the Sabbath, no church of Christ with which she might participate in the ordinances, and no house of worship to which she could resort with her children for instruction and devotion. Is it strange that she should hang her harp upon the willows, and weep as she remembered Zion? She not only wept but prayed. Her hope was in a covenant-keeping God. To his word she had recourse, as she was wont in times of trial. She heard a voice in the divine oracles, 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct thy paths.' Encouraged by his promises, and the blessings vouchsafed to those who thus had sought him, she resolved to observe a season of forty days' prayer and fasting. This she did, with no eye or ear as witness but the Omniscient eye of God.

"Her first petition was that God would so order events in his providence, that the stated preaching of the gospel might be established in this place; second, that a church might be organized here on the foundations of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; thirdly, that a house of worship might be erected, and dedicated to the service of God,

to which she and the people in this place might go up with their children from Sabbath to Sabbath. Eight years ago this very month was this forty days' fasting and prayer sacredly observed. And what has been the result? Was it a vain service? Hear and judge. The first result was the confirmation of that mother's faith in the efficacy of prayer. Though the blessing sought was long delayed, yet her faith staggered not, but rested in the promise and power of God. Three years after, light began to break, and the first petition of her heart was answered by the establishment of stated preaching in Beechwood. Eighteen months passed, and the second petition was granted by the formation of a church, entitled The Evangelical Union Church, in Beechwood, consisting of twelve members. Six persons have since been added.

Two years after the church was formed, the third petition of that memorable season of fasting and prayer began to have its accomplishment, in the movement of the church and people to obtain funds for a meeting-house. And here it seems appropriate to notice that this Christian mother, in her communings with the Great Head of the Church, felt that her alms and prayers should go up before Him together, as a memorial of her faith, a sacrifice well pleasing in his sight. So she covenanted to devote the tenth part of all the earnings which she could call her own to the erection of the house of worship which she had asked Him to build. The first offering cast into the treasury of the Lord towards the rearing of this building was a *three-cent piece*, a tithe of her first extra earnings, after her season of fasting and prayer. Was there not, therefore, a peculiar fitness and significance in depositing a three-cent piece in the box placed under the corner-stone of this house on the 18th of September last?

"It may be asked how and when these facts came to my knowledge. After the organization of this church, more than three years since, at the close of a female prayer-meeting, this mother very modestly related to Mrs. Stone her past experiences, including these facts, and at the same time handing her a small purse containing thirty-two dollars and forty-two cents in small pieces of coin. There were cents, three-cent pieces, half dimes, dimes, quarters and one gold dollar,—the earnings of her own extra industry during five years.

"This offering she desired me to take and appropriate towards the erection of a house of worship. I said 'Good woman, not so; for I see no prospect that such a house can be erected, at least for the present. No movement has been made in that direction by this people, and the general impression is, that the time to build the Lord's house in this place has not yet come. You had better keep this, or appropriate it to some other object.' Her emphatic reply was, 'No: it has been sacredly consecrated to the building of the Lord's house in this place. I wish you to use it for that purpose.'

"What could I do? I remarked that I would deposit it in a

savings bank, and, should a house be built, it should be used for that purpose. Having obtained a premium of ten dollars on the gold and silver, I deposited her gift, amounting to forty-two dollars and forty-two cents, in a Boston savings bank.

"This offering, notice, was deposited before it was thought possible by this church and people to erect a temple of the Lord. When my faith has faltered, looking at the obstacles in the way of raising funds for this building, I have been stimulated by a remembrance of the faith and prayers of this Christian mother, and of those associated with her of like spirit in this infant church. Their voice ever has been, 'Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.' We knew that the silver and the gold were the Lord's, and that He could dispose those who were able, to favor this the work of our hands.

"To-day, as we behold the completion and dedication of this house of worship under circumstances so auspicious, we cannot but gratefully acknowledge that the Lord has indeed heard prayer, and has prospered the work of our hands; for we know that, except He build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Having traced the origin and progress of this enterprise as developed in the experience and movements of an individual mind, we are now prepared to glance at the more visible movements. Some of the people in this community who felt a desire to have preaching Sabbath evenings, invited several ministers in this vicinity, of different persuasions, to supply them. Among these was the Rev. E. Porter Dyer, of Hingham. After his lecture, he asked if the people would not like to have, regularly, preaching on the Sabbath, and what they would contribute towards its support. Individuals present said it was their desire to have preaching, but could not say how much could be raised for that purpose. He said, if they wished such preaching as he preached, and would raise one hundred dollars towards it, and pay the rent of the hall and other incidental expenses, he would see what could be secured from abroad to sustain the preaching. The people made an effort, and obtained the required subscription. Mr. Dyer laid the subject before the Norfolk and Pilgrim Conferences of Churches. A delegation was appointed by each of these conferences to consult with a committee of this people, and advise in the premises. The result was that the people on their part agreed to secure the hall as a place of worship, pay the rent and other necessary expenses, and raise one hundred dollars towards preaching. These conferences agreed, with two hundred dollars from the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society, to make up a salary of five hundred dollars for preaching. These conferences sanctioned the doings of their delegates. The ministry of the present pastor dates from July 1, 1862, to the present time. The services have been held in Eagle Hall, fitted up for that purpose.

"A notice given by the proprietors of the hall to the commit-

tee of the society, that they must vacate the hall, as it was rented for other purposes, stirred up the minds of the people, both old and young, male and female, to make an effort to build a house of worship. As the result of this effort some six hundred dollars were subscribed by the people. I then said, if they would raise a thousand dollars in this community, I would endeavor to raise two thousand dollars in the Norfolk Conference; as it was believed that a suitable building could be erected at that time for about three thousand dollars. Their second effort resulted in subscriptions to the amount of nine hundred and seventy-five dollars in money, and about two hundred dollars pledged in labor by those who had neither silver nor gold to give. The subject was laid before the Norfolk Conference of Churches, at a meeting held Sept. 26, 1865, at South Weymouth, and the following resolutions were passed: 1. 'We approve the object of the Beechwood enterprise, and recommend it to our churches as worthy of their Christian regard.

"'2. But we recommend, whatever erection may be made, should be held in trust by a committee of this Conference, for the purpose of evangelical worship at Beechwood.'

"In accordance with these resolutions, a committee was chosen consisting of Dr. E. Alden, of Randolph; Dea. N. White, of East Randolph; Rev. J. P. Terry, of South Weymouth; and Rev. A. T. Reed, of Cohasset; to visit Beechwood, on Monday, Oct. 2, at 10½ o'clock, A. M., to confer with the Building Committee and others interested, in order to mature matters in reference to said house of worship. Terms were drawn up by the Norfolk Conference Committee, on which subscriptions were to be solicited from abroad, which were submitted to and indorsed by the Evangelical Union Society in Beechwood, Oct. 21, 1865. On Nov. 3, 1865, I commenced canvassing in Norfolk Conference. Having obtained about $1,000 in a few towns, the work of collection was for a while suspended on account of a sudden rise in the cost of building. As it was found that we could worship in the Hall during the winter, the Building Committee deemed it advisable to defer further efforts to build until spring, hoping that the expense of building would be less. As the pulpit and pews in the Sanford Church, East Bridgewater, were for sale at a low estimate, the Ladies Sewing Circle appropriated funds on hand to the purchase of the same. They were brought to Beechwood. The pulpit was placed in the pastor's kitchen, and the pews in his barn, where they remained over a year, until placed in the new church edifice. By this, over three hundred dollars were saved in the expense of the church.

"I resumed the canvassing of Norfolk Conference for funds, in April 1866. Having obtained over two thousand dollars, the Building Committee resolved to commence a house of worship, April 1866, trusting in God for further funds. The securing of such a house then appeared to be a case of life or death to this religious enter-

prise. The expense of the building was estimated in cash, by Geo. C. Lee, Esq., who bossed the same at four thousand dollars. But the cash payments amount to over five thousand dollars. A vestry and steeple were added to the house, thereby increasing the expense.

SUMMARY.

Subscriptions obtained by Rev. C. Stone, abroad	$2,864 90
Cash received of Sewing Circle	300 00
Collected by George Beal, Jr.	75 00
" by C. Stone in Beechwood, Scituate	139 50
Donation of Mrs. Wm. Harris	50 00
Received by Aaron Pratt	593 75
	$4,023 15
Total expense	$5,104 00
Paid	4,023 15
	$1,080 85
Collected at the Dedication	$400 00
From individuals and Sewing Circle	380 86
From American Congregational Union	400 00
	$1,180 86

"Adding the value of the organ, bell, communion-table and other articles, presented to the church by different individuals, the actual value of the house as furnished is $5,734.00."

SERMON

BY

REV. JAMES H. MEANS,

OF DORCHESTER.

The day long looked for has come. The prayer of faith, after long waiting, is answered. The faithful minister, whose old age God has kindly crowned with this opportunity of usefulness, beholds visible proof that he has not toiled in vain. The people who have shared his labors and anxieties rejoice with him, as this pleasant sanctuary opens its doors to be a spiritual home for them and their children; by God's blessing for their children's children in successive generations. Christian pastors and friends from other churches and towns gladly gather at this dedication, feeling that the prosperity of Christ's cause here is their common interest and joy.

Thus assembled, it may prepare us more intelligently to consecrate this edifice to God, if we meditate upon his promise, recorded in

ISAIAH LX. 7:

"*I will glorify the house of my glory.*"

The whole passage, of which this forms a part, is a glowing prediction of the exaltation of the Church. It portrays the brightest vision of her golden age which the "evangelical prophet" ever saw. The glory of God, like a new sunrising, was to lighten the earth. The land and the sea were jointly to yield their tribute; kings were to bring their gifts; the riches of the world were to be poured forth, and Gentile nations from afar were to hasten to show forth the praises of the Lord. He would be propitious. He would make Zion the joy of many generations. Her walls should be called Salvation; and her gates,

praise. Her sacrifices should come up with acceptance on his altar, and thus he would *glorify the house of his glory.*

These promises cheer us to-day. This is our great hope, our chief desire, that God by his presence would glorify this place.

We would testify our belief, in the outset, that the real glory of the sanctuary does not consist in any material beauty.

It is indeed well to make it commodious and attractive. Such is the dictate of a reverent spirit. As a house called by God's name and devoted to his service, we would not grudge to it a portion of that wealth He has given to us so freely. It is not meet for us to dwell in ceiled houses, while God's earthly resting-place is left dreary and neglected. The unpainted meeting-houses which we have seen rearing their dilapidated fronts on the top of bleak and barren hills are a reproach to any people. They indicate an irreligious selfishness and culpable indifference to God's honor. He will indeed smile upon an assembly in a barn when persecution or poverty renders such a resort necessary; but, when men refuse a fitting outlay upon the house of his glory that they may have more to spend for themselves, He is insulted and offended.

On the other hand, there may be extravagance in this matter as sinful as parsimony. Never should a sanctuary be so expensive that those accustomed to a plain mode of life cannot feel at home amid its costly decorations; or that any should be driven from its privileges, because too poor to pay their excessive price. Let there be good taste, even a modest elegance, but not luxury or display. The beauty of the building is to be in keeping with its sacred uses, and God is to be propitiated by spiritual worship, not by splendor.

Nor, again, does the glory of the sanctuary depend on the number or station of those who gather there. It is truly pleasant to see a church well filled with an intelligent and cultivated congregation. But we mistake, if we think that mainly for their use the house was reared, or that they honor it by their attendance. Let the highest come for their own good, because they need the same

mercy vouchsafed to the chief of sinners; and let earthly distinctions disappear before the Maker of all. Royalty itself must hide its honors before the King of kings. If there be no more exalted presence than man's in the house of God, our hearts would faint within us.

But we know that with the gathering throng there cometh an unseen presence. One, who is our Father, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, hath chosen Zion as his habitation. The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, yet he condescends thus to dwell with men. This above all makes the sanctuary glorious.

God meets with his people there, First, *to receive their worship.* The Psalmist thus addressed Him, "O thou who inhabitest the praises of Israel!" We think far too lightly of the services of devotion. Our praises are often heartless, our prayers a formality. The interest of the occasion seems to centre in the sermon.

Yet it is worship to which especially we are called; an act rendered necessary by our relations to God, which is hallowed by the usage of his true children from the beginning, and for the neglect of which the very heathen would put us to shame. It is the most exalted service in which we can engage. To speak to God is more than speaking of Him. Never are the great religious emotions, — homage, trust, gratitude, penitence, love, joy, — so quickened into intensity, never does the soul so rise up as on eagles' wings, never has faith such beatific visions, as when thus employed. Such hours are the golden ones of life. Then earth becomes the vestibule of heaven, — of that world where blest spirits and holy angels never weary of the songs of praise.

Man may well gird himself for earnest effort, when he worships. He is attempting to set forth perfections which no forms of speech can compass, to cast off the finite, to penetrate beyond the visible to the infinite and eternal. He asks the Sovereign of the Universe to listen to his cry, to regard his wants, to pity his sorrows, to assist his efforts; he boldly grasps the hand that moveth all things, and, pleading the promises, reposes on the bosom of infinite love.

And in the sanctuary it is not the petition and homage of one which is offered, but of a multitude of united hearts, each swelling the volume of praise and deepening the emphasis of desire. It is the voice of his disciples agreeing together which the Mediator presents before the throne, and He may say as He intercedes, These are mine, ransomed and beloved; they are exulting in the truths I revealed, they are seeking the grace I promised: according to thy covenant, O Father! accept and bless them.

Has the voice of prayer and praise such an echo on high? Does He, whose ear is filled with heaven's harmonies, turn towards us with attentive interest? Are the angels sent down, and does the Spirit come laden with blessings, in gracious answer? How solemn then is the service! O ye who worship, be ready to put off your shoes from off your feet, for you stand on holy ground; say in spirit, like him who saw the ladder from earth to heaven, "Truly the Lord is in this place;" like him who wrapped his face in his mantle as he went out to meet the Lord on Horeb, let your countenances be cast down; like him who said, "Behold I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes," be unfeignedly self-abased.

Be also sincere. Offend not Him on whose high name you call by the mere pretence of devotion; trifle not with the Searcher of hearts by a listless mind; repay not His condescension by distrust or proud unbelief; turn not such privileges as these into the occasion of a curse. Dedicating this house to worship, we trust that by its services you will in truth draw near to God. May your songs, accompanied by music expressive of devotion rather than artistic skill, mingle in congenial harmony with the anthems of the redeemed, and their swelling strains soothe the troubled, animate the listless, and lift you up to the peace and brightness of heaven. May your prayers be humble, believing, fervent; no wandering eye, no bold countenance, no irreverent posture, making them a mockery. Bursting from earnest hearts, may they secure priceless blessings for yourselves, and range over the world in their longing intercessions, so that in this new

house of prayer another "ladder" shall be set up on which the full-handed messengers of God shall continually descend. May your sacramental seasons be true communions, both with men and God. Thus celebrate worship, not as an incidental, but essential, part of the service here; throwing your souls into the holy work, of which we cannot say whether more it pleases God or benefits man.

Then this church, which, far away from others, now for the first time adorns this spot, will overshadow this village with protecting wings, and your homes will be safer, more peaceful, happier, because God is thus honored in your midst.

God is present in the sanctuary, SECONDLY, *to bear witness to the truth.* Preaching is an ordinance peculiar to Christianity. "Paganism knew it not as one of the methods of spreading a religious faith. It was not heard in heathen temples. Socrates was not a preacher, nor was Zeno nor Seneca nor Antoninus. Judaism did not include preaching among its sacred offices. The explanation of the Law sometimes given in the synagogue bore little resemblance to the sermon of the early Church." The wisdom of Christ instituted this method. Other founders of religions relied on the sword, or the patronage of the mighty; He sent forth a band of unarmed men with the great commission, Go, preach the gospel: let living hearts speak to the living, lift high the cross, and tell its wondrous story: adapt the truth to the peculiarities of men, dividing it wisely in faith and hope,—a method precisely suited to man, yet original with Christ; simple and unartificial like all He did, yet how mighty!

The preacher's themes are the grandest conceivable. All that there is glorious in heaven; all that is dreadful in hell; all which concerns man's spiritual history in this world,—his dangers, sorrows, struggles and joys, his passage through the dark valley to the judgment; all that can be comprehended of God, of what He is, of what He has done for man, or purposes in the future,—these themes, comprising the mysteries of the divine existence, of creation, of providence, of grace, of retribution, are all his, and his peculiarly. He has the range of all man's spiritual interests

of all duties, temptations and sins. Nothing that touches morality is contraband to him.

Yet his chief message is salvation through Christ. He is an ambassador to entreat men, as in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. This is a message in which all have a common interest. It speaks to man as man, a worm of the dust, yet an heir of immortality, — in all ages the same sinning, accountable creature of God.

Thus is the work of the preacher great, peculiar, necessary. We say this, in face of all assertions that the age for the pulpit has gone by, and now the lecture and the press are to be man's great instructors. The lecturer cannot take the place of the preacher, — unless he become one himself, under another name. There is a necessity for the discussion of religious themes; a craving for those who can minister to minds enfeebled and oppressed by sin, which cannot be slighted. The Lord's Day will furnish the occasion, and man's imperishable wants the demand, for sermons until the end.

Nor can the press supplant the pulpit. Reading can never rival speaking. If all could read, and had access to the best of books, the great majority would choose rather to hear. There is keen pleasure in the glow of sympathy that pervades an attentive congregation; there is a charm in listening to an earnest voice, speaking from an earnest heart. God has made the mind for this, and we all know that the published sermon or address sounds tame compared with the same words spoken. You cannot print the tone, the life. While men then are what they are, preaching will have its place and power.

It flowed from the apostles' hallowed lips; it charmed the hearers of the golden-mouthed Chrysostom at Constantinople; it burst as though the thunders uttered their voice from Luther and his fellow-reformers; it subdued the tens of thousands who thronged after Wesley and Whitefield; it held the auditors of Edwards at Northampton awe-struck and trembling: and are we to believe that an agency which has accomplished so much in different ages and under such varied circumstances has now lost

its power and is out of date? Do we believe that the world is hastening to a better future, that religion is to be linked in closer wedlock with all daily interests and pursuits, and yet think that the preaching of God's word will lose its interest and be supplanted? There are no premises to support such a conclusion.

Moreover, this theory overlooks the fundamental fact, before referred to, that God is present to give efficacy to the truth. On Him the preacher relies for success. He knows it is in the power of no argument, no human oratory or appeal, to change the heart. He knows, on the other hand, that saving power may be given to the simplest utterance of the most familiar truth. Here is the peculiarity of his position,—morning and evening he sows the seed, not knowing which shall prosper. He cannot calculate on results; he cannot tell in what way the word he speaks will accomplish God's purposes; he never expects to know here the full effect of his ministrations, — yet he doubts not that God will work by him.

This the sceptic forgets. He argues as if results were to be proportioned exactly to the amount of intellectual power and skill exerted. He reckons the number of the advocates of truth, their position and apparent influence, the number and rank and learning of those arrayed against them, and he is able to demonstrate — on his own principles, perhaps to demonstrate correctly, that they cannot prevail.

It is in the face of such demonstrations that Christianity has thus far made its way. The Jews thought they had buried it in the tomb of Christ, and, as they were confounded, so have its foes been in all succeeding time. Its progress has been a problem too hard for the mere philosopher. Napoleon, it is said, confessed that all his knowldge of the world was baffled by the rise of the Christian Church. But the believer expects results exceeding the instrumentality employed, and facts confirm his faith. A pastor once told me of a discourse from the text, "Woe unto them which are at ease in Zion!" as having been the most useful of his sermons, though he could see in it nothing peculiar. Dr. Payson once wrote a sermon mainly in a single morning, of

which he said, "I could not but wonder to see God work by it." Sometimes a short expression, dropped incidentally, is fastened forever in the mind of a hearer. "Oh, the wrath to come!" was the abrupt exclamation from an eminent divine, which sank into the mind of a youth who could not rest till he found peace in Jesus.

Sometimes, also, while the faithful pastor is pursuing his round of duties, he is gladdened by finding several, separated from each other, simultaneously awakened; meetings for prayer are full and solemn; a subduing sense of the nearness of God falls on all; the careless, the proud, the obstinate, are bowed beneath a resistless power; tears and confessions change into thanksgiving, and the rejoicing people of God stand amazed at the greatness and freeness of his salvation.

Thus God surprises with good those who faithfully proclaim the gospel. They may be unworthy, they may be ready, like Whitefield, to cry out, almost fainting, "Why me, Lord; why me?" But God chooses his own instruments, — sometimes the feeblest, that the praise and honor may be his only.

Thus, by blessing the truth, He glorifieth the house of his glory. And what an honor is put on any spot made the entrance to the kingdom of heaven! What so august as Jehovah's presence-chamber! Angels watching with joy are there; Christ is there; the Spirit is there, — all waiting on man, ruined yet redeemed. How precious its services! What everliving residence in the memory and heart have words there uttered! What epochs in life are many of the hours there spent! Through eternity, how will the sanctuary rise before the mind! the most hallowed spot associated with our sojourn here.

To the preaching of the truth in Jesus, then, as well as to worship, would we dedicate this house to-day. As, nearly a century and a half ago, the fathers of this ancient town, on a winter's day, bleak as this, laid the first foundations, we build another church on the same unchanging, imperishable faith. It is to be a pillar of the truth. We ask no novel doctrine. That which has stood the test of ages, the truth for which Reformers

have contended, for which Pilgrims braved the wintry sea and the wilderness and savage foe, for which martyrs have died exultingly; the truth which has transformed evil men, made their lives beautiful and deaths triumphant; which has peopled Heaven, — this truth is all that we desire. On this we rest to-day, — a precious corner-stone, a tried and sure foundation.

Dear friends of this church and congregation, heartily do we now congratulate you on the completion of this edifice, consecrated henceforth to the worship of God and the ministration of his Word. We know how much toil and self-sacrifice have builded together here, and that some of the gifts smallest in amount have represented the largest self-denial. We know how many prayers have followed each step of the work, and sympathies drawn from an ever-widening circle. "Beechwood" has become a name deeply interesting to many through this enterprise. And fairer, more precious than the golden ornaments and inlaid marbles which elsewhere deck the temples of God are these sympathies and sacrifices invisibly inwrought into these walls. Already the place seems holy ground. No visible cloud will fill this house to-day, as once filled the temple at Jerusalem, yet greater privileges will bless the worshippers here, and fuller revelations of truth. Not by human intercessors will your offerings be presented, but by the divine Mediator himself, ministering before the throne. The way to the Holiest is now open for all, and the one perfect sacrifice for sin has superseded all feebler rites.

Make then this house, your spiritual home, dear and joyous. Hither come, when you have been burdened and vexed with earthly cares, and forget all, as the veil is lifted and you behold the bright, unfading inheritance to which you are called. Hither come, when the worse burden of sin oppresses, and cast that off forever before the cross. Hither bring your dead, or, when they have been laid to rest, come in your grief, that He who is the Resurrection and the Life may comfort you. In brighter hours let these walls echo with your thanksgivings. Celebrate the

supper of the Lord with holy joy. Bring your children to receive the seal of God's gracious covenant, and let whole families be joined together here. Come, not as a favor to your minister, but out of regard to yourselves; not to hear him preach, but to meet God.

Thus doing, no words can tell what this sanctuary will be to you. Beautiful is it now in its tasteful neatness,—so complete in all its appointments, with pealing organ and clear-toned bell; but far more hallowed will it be as sacred associations cluster around it, and it becomes the birth-place of souls. Its influence will radiate far. God may raise up some one here who shall do a great work in Christ's kingdom. He will raise up those who shall shine as stars, when the constellations of the heavens are dim.

Love this house, then, because God loves it. Not by pageants is He pleased, but by humble worship. A year ago I was standing in the most splendid Christian edifice human hands have ever builded, and there the so-called Head of the Church robed in satin and gold, surrounded by kneeling cardinals, lifted up the consecrated wafer, while thousands cast themselves prostrate before it. There was a moment of profound silence, and then three silver trumpets rang out a clear blast, echoing from the lofty dome like a voice from Heaven. Every heart thrilled: it was man's greatest effort for a most imposing ceremony.

But, at the same moment, from some humble meeting-house like this, was the cry of a burdened soul ascending, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" and the ear of the Highest caught that sound, louder than trumpet-peal, more acceptable than the most gorgeous pomp of the most elaborate ritual.

Thus worship here in spirit and truth, and He who enters this house to-day will dwell among you. Dedicate yourselves to the Lord as living temples. Then, when the sanctuary built without hands receives its worshippers, when the everlasting doors are lifted up that the King of Glory may enter there, you shall find that this house of God has been to you the very gate of heaven.

CONCLUDING EXERCISES.

After the discourse, which was listened to with marked attention, Rev. H. B. Hooker, D.D., Secretary of the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society, offered the dedicatory prayer.

Just as the audience were about to sing the doxology, Deacon Charles E. Bailey of the Baptist Church, Scituate, rose and said: "It seems to me that we could sing the doxology better, if the debt against the house were first wiped out; a dollar apiece would do it." This suggestion was immediately adopted. In generous emulation, and by varied forms, the debt, four hundred dollars, was cleared off on the spot.

While this pleasant stir was going on, Rev. Alexander J. Sessions, of Scituate, spoke as follows: "It may be half impertinent to interpret this scene, for it interprets itself: the meaning of it floats in the air; and yet you may like to have a voice given to it. There is both religion and philosophy in it. It is the sacred satisfaction of helping forward a good cause, — the cause of God; and it is the grateful incitement and facility of working together. We need not feel afraid of after regrets, of excess of enthusiasm, and of giving. I congratulate the people of BEECHWOOD upon this tasteful house of worship. It will make your own houses of more pecuniary value. Your homes shall be all the better for it, your families happier families. It will lift up the whole place. These trees will grow the better,— these pines and cedars, and your beechwood tree.

"As to him who has been the honored instrument of all this, I have never been so impressed as here to-day, — if I may speak it out thus, — that his earthly labors are drawing to an end. But what a work he has wrought for you here! I can hardly conceive of a young man coming to you, who would have rendered such a kind of varied service here as has Father Stone in these five years past.

"His companion also, in spite of ill-health and continued feebleness, has filled out-offices and accomplished ends, which a young woman, coming as the partner of a young pastor, could not have filled and accomplished, even though her step might have been as quick and elastic as the emotions of her heart.

"And then, that angel daughter of these aged parents, just now gone to her home on high, and whose eye of memory, if no other eye of hers, turns to this spot to-day! What a mingling in, and beautiful variety, was her mission to this religious society, this Sabbath School, this whole community! Her sweet life and her triumphant death will rest with you and upon this place of BEECHWOOD as an unending benediction, — a very savor of life unto life."

Not a few tearful eyes in the audience testified to the truth and fitness of this tribute to the honored living and the dear departed. With hearts of gratitude the congregation then arose, were led in a prayer of thanksgiving by Rev. Mr. Means, and, facing the pulpit, joined in the doxology, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." As a pleasant close to the day, the people of Beechwood, and those of their guests from abroad who were able to remain, gathered again at evening, and listened to an interesting sermon in the Lecture Room by Rev. D. W. Waldron. His text was Heb. iii.: 2, "O Lord! revive thy work!"—a prayer which seasonably followed the exercises of the afternoon, and which embodies the desires, not only of this infant church, but also those of their numerous friends who have helped in furnishing them with a place of worship.

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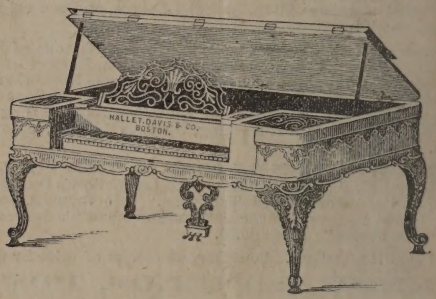

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